4.3.1.7 Cultural and Paleontological Resources

This section discusses potential impacts to cultural and paleontological resources that may result from the construction and operation of the pit disassembly/conversion facility at each of the representative sites analyzed. The total land disturbance for this facility is 14 ha (35 acres) during construction of which 12 ha (30 acres) would be used during operation. A 1.6-km (1-mi) reduced-access buffer zone would be created around the facility. The buffer zone would be contained within existing boundaries at all sites except ORR. For the discussion of impacts, the term cultural resources includes prehistoric, historic, and Native American resources. Cultural and paleontological resources at the representative sites may be affected directly through ground disturbance during construction, building modification, visual intrusion of the project to the historic setting or environmental context of historic sites, visual and audio intrusions to Native American resources, reduced access to traditional use areas, and unauthorized artifact collecting and vandalism.

Hanford Site

The facility would be constructed west of the 200 East Area. Although no archaeological resources have been identified during surveys conducted in the adjacent 200 Areas, some may exist in the project area. Any such sites may be identified through additional surveys. Any identified sites would be avoided. Operation would not result in additional impact.

Although all of Hanford is considered sacred land by some Native American groups, no areas of great cultural significance have been identified close to the 200 Areas. Resources may be identified through project-specific consultation. Impacts from construction and operation may include reduced access to traditional use areas or visual or auditory intrusion into sacred or ceremonial space.

Pliocene and Pleistocene fossil remains have been discovered at Hanford. Although none have been recorded in the project area, they may exist. These resources may be affected by ground disturbing construction. Operation would not have an additional impact on paleontological resources.

Nevada Test Site

The pit disassembly/conversion facility would be constructed in Area 6, near the DAF on Frenchman Flat. In 1984, a Class III cultural resources survey was conducted across the 660-ha (1,610-acre) DAF site and no NRHP-eligible sites were identified. Although no resources were identified within the DAF project area, Frenchman Flat contains 49 sites which have been determined eligible for inclusion on the NRHP. Recorded prehistoric sites within Frenchman Flat include base and temporary camps, quarries and lithic reduction areas. Identified historic resources include sites associated with nuclear testing and research. Additional unsurveyed lands necessary for the proposed facility may contain similar prehistoric or historic resources. Impacts to any identified resources would occur during construction, but not operation, of the proposed facility.

The CGTO has conducted surveys over portions of Frenchman Flat and has identified at least 20 plant species of importance to Native Americans. Additional project-specific consultations would be necessary to identify impacts to Native American resources resulting from the construction and operation of the facility. Potential impacts include reduced access to traditional use areas and visual or auditory intrusions to sacred space.

Although none have been identified to date, Quaternary deposits containing scientifically valuable paleontological remains may occur in the area to be disturbed during construction. Such remains have been found near NTS. Paleontological resources may be affected by construction, but not operation, of the facility.

Idaho National Engineering Laboratory

The pit disassembly/conversion facility would be constructed within the existing ICPP security area. The facility would be sited in a location previously approved for the construction of the Special Isotope Separation Project. A surface survey of the proposed project area identified no sites. Although it is possible, the ICPP is unlikely to contain intact subsurface cultural deposits due to prior ground disturbance and environmental setting. INEL has a contingency plan in place should any archaeological remains be discovered during construction. Two historic sites occur adjacent to the ICPP: one historic can scatter across the Big Lost River, to the northeast, and one abandoned homestead to the east. The can scatter is not considered eligible for NRHP listing and the homestead has been fenced off for protection. Construction and operation are not expected to affect either site.

Native American resources may be affected by the proposed action. Facility construction and operation may have visual or auditory impact on traditional use areas or sacred sites. Resources may be identified through consultation with the interested tribes.

Some paleontological remains may be encountered during construction. The ICPP lies on alluvial gravels associated with the Big Lost River floodplain, which have produced fossilized remains. Operation would not have an effect on paleontological resources.

Pantex Plant

The pit disassembly/conversion facility would be constructed within Zone 12. Areas to be disturbed by development have not been systematically surveyed for cultural or paleontological resources. Prior to construction, additional survey work may be necessary. Because Zone 12 is disturbed and removed from water sources, it is unlikely to contain intact subsurface prehistoric or historic remains. Operation would have no additional impact to archaeological resources as it does not involve additional ground disturbance.

DOE has recently initiated consultation with Native American groups that have expressed interest in Pantex lands. To date, no Native American resources have been identified within Zone 12. Resources may be identified through additional consultation. Although no mortuary remains have been discovered at Pantex to date, it is possible that some exist within land to be disturbed by development. Burials are often considered to be important Native American resources. Also, construction and operation could affect traditionally used plant and animal species.

The surficial geology of the Pantex area consists of silts, clays, and sands of the Blackwater Draw Formation. In other areas of the High Plains, this formation has produced Late Pleistocene vertebrate remains including wooly mammoth, bison, and camel, sometimes in context with archaeological remains. The land to be disturbed during construction may contain some fossilized remains. Operation would not have an effect on paleontological resources.

Oak Ridge Reservation

No impacts to cultural or paleontological resources are expected to result from the construction or operation of the facility at ORR. It would be sited within Y–12. The area is disturbed and therefore unlikely to contain any intact archaeological deposits. No Native American resources have been identified at Y–12 to date, nor is it known to contain scientifically valuable paleontological remains.

Savannah River Site

The location for the pit disassembly/conversion facility is open space within F-Area. Portions of F-Area have been surveyed and contain sites potentially eligible for the NRHP. Additional surveys would be conducted in unsurveyed areas to be disturbed by construction. Site types known to occur at SRS include remains of

prehistoric base camps, quarries, and workshops. Historic resources include remains of farmsteads, cemeteries, churches, and schools. Resources such as these may be affected by new facility construction, but not operation.

Some Native American resources may be affected by the proposed action. Resources such as prehistoric sites, cemeteries, and traditionally used plants could be affected during construction. Facility operation could result in reduced access to traditional use areas or sacred space. Visual or auditory intrusions to the areas may also result from facility construction or operation. Resources would be identified through consultation with the potentially affected tribes.

No scientifically valuable fossil remains have been recorded at SRS to date. Facility construction and operation are not expected to affect paleontological resources.

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